

Message Text

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ACTION TRSE-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 L-03 CU-05 EB-11 CIAE-00 INR-11

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FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 099

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

UNCLAS PORE MORESBY 0185

FOR INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION,
NATIONAL CENTRAL BUREAU, DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EPAP, PP

SUBJECT: THEFT OF IMPORTANT NEW GUINEAN ARTIFACT

1. ACTING DIRECTOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA PUBLIC MUSEUM
AND ART GALLERY (NATIONAL MUSEUM URGENTLY REQUESTED
CONGEN NOTIFY TREASURY THAT NEW IRELAND ARTIFACT
(CARVED MASK FROM TABAR ISLAND NEAR NEW IRELAND)
BEING HELD BY U.S. CUSTOMS IN NEW YORK WAS ILLEGALLY
REMOVED FROM PNG.

2. MUSEUM AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE NOW ESTABLISH-
ING FACTS OF CASE SHOWING GALERIE JACQUES KERCHACHE IN
PARIS ILLEGALLY OBTAINED ARTIFACT SOLD TO BEN HELLER,
INC. NYC. (WE UNDERSTAND U.S. CUSTOMS OFFICIAL IN NEW
YORK SEIZED CARVING FROM HELLER.)

3. PNG OFFICIALS DESIRE SPECIFIC INFORMATION REQUIRED
BY U.S. CUSTOMS TO DOCUMENT PNG CLAIMS TO ARTIFACT.

4. THIS TABAR ISLAND MASK IS ABSOLUTELY UNIQUE AND
BESIDES BEING AN EXTRAORDINARY ART OBJECT, IT IS SO
RARE THAT APPARENTLY ONLY THE DRESDEN MUSEUM POSSESSES
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ANYTHING SIMILAR. DRESDEN PIECES WERE BROUGHT BACK

BY THE FIRST GERMAN ETHNOLOGISTS WHO EXPLORED THE REGIONS OF NEW IRELAND. THE MASK NOW BEING HELD BY U.S. CUSTOMS IS LITERALLY A DOCUMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF TABAR AND PRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE.

5. FYI: THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARILY SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR PNG AND WE BELIEVE FURTHER USG ACTIONS BUILDING ON CUSTOM'S SEIZURE WOULD HELP IN TWO WAYS: 1) INHIBIT U.S. COLLECTORS WHO DESIRE TO PURCHASE ILLEGALLY OBTAINED ARTIFACTS IN THE FUTURE, AND 2) DEMONSTRATE INTERNATIONALLY PARTICULARLY IN THIS AREA OF THE WORLD, U.S. DETERMINATION TO AID SMALL COUNTRIES SUCH AS PNG PRESERVE THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE. IF MASK CAN BE LEGALLY RETURNED TO PNG SUGGEST CONGEN PRESENT IT TO CHIEF MINISTER. GPNG IS WILLING TO PAY ALL SHIPPING COSTS INCURRED TO RETURN ARTIFACT TO PORT MORESBY. OLMSTED

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Message Attributes

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